

LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Henry J. Mroz Administration Office
155 Merrimack Street
Lowell, Massachusetts 01852

John J. Leahy
Mayor and Chairperson

Andre P. Descoteaux
Vice-Chairperson

Hilary Clark
Michael Dillon Jr.
Dominik Lay
Connie A. Martin

Human Resources & Labor Relations
Subcommittee Meeting

Thursday, May 27, 2021
City Hall – Council Chamber
6:00 p.m.

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Subcommittee Members Present:	Chairperson Hilary Clark, Andy Descoteaux and Connie Martin
School Committee Members Present:	Mayor Leahy, Mr. Dillon, Ms. Doherty and Mr. Lay
School Department Personnel Present:	Dr. Joel Boyd, Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Hall, Chief Operating Officer Ms. Robin Desmond, Chief Academic Officer Ms. Turner, Chief Financial Officer Ms. Latifah Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement Officer

Chairperson Clark called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. The following agenda item was discussed:

1. **Superintendent's Evaluation**
2. **Review of Job Descriptions Currently in Suspense Account**

Chairperson Clark opened the meeting and asked Superintendent Boyd to address the Subcommittee. Superintendent Boyd stated that this past year was an unprecedented year of significant change due to the ongoing health crisis, but together we were able to meet or exceed each goal and target what was established at the beginning of the year. Superintendent Boyd broke down each standard with highlights.

Standard I Highlights

- Maintained the district's focus on early learning with continuous offerings of both in-person and remote options for pre-K students throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining enrollment of 453 students in 2020-2021 and remaining on track with long-term plans for universal PreK with an expansion of 55 early learning seats to start the 2021-2022 school year.
- Improved the districtwide average daily attendance rate from 92% in the first quarter of 2020-2021 to 94% in the third quarter, nearly matching the pre-COVID shutdown estimate of 95% from the third quarter of 2019-2020.
- Implemented the District's first ever standardized social-emotional learning assessment to monitor SEL needs and target supports among all students, reducing the percentage of students identified in the highest tier of required support from 17% in the fall of 2020 to 14% in the spring of 2021.
- Increased the number of students participating in the district's K-12 summer program from 1500 in the summer of 2019 to over 3000 in the summer of 2020.
- Increased enrollment in the District's Early College partnership program with Middlesex Community College by more than 500% with 863 more students enrolled in one or more courses that are eligible for college credits in 2020-2021 compared to the prior year (Lowell Early College).
- Redesigned the districtwide middle level band program to increase access to the arts and increase alignment between middle and high school programming (Afternoon in the Arts).

Standard II Highlights

- Developed multiple, scenario-based budget plans for FY21 to account for the variability in statewide economic forecasts following the COVID-19 shutdown, resulting in stabilized school budgets to open school in September, a balanced districtwide budget immediately upon receiving final state revenue figures in October, and a re-investment of approximately \$10 million of cost savings in strategic initiatives in the spring, including facility upgrades, technology enhancements and additional professional learning for instructional staff across the district.
- Implemented phase 2 of the newly-overhauled school budgeting process, increasing the total direct allocation to schools from \$1.8 million in FY19 to \$148.6 million in FY22 and increasing the level of site-based flexibility in spending from 1% to 69% over the same time span (Fair Student Funding).
- Improved overall staff recruitment and districtwide hiring practices through a concerted effort to identify and eliminate race-based employment barriers, increasing the percentage of teachers who identify as people of color from 6.8% in 2019 to 10% in 2021 improved the safety and emergency preparedness of each facility through an internally-developed district-wide school safety audit protocol, resulting in an average school safety rating of meets expectations for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Implemented the District's first comprehensive Digital Learning Plan, increasing the ratio of mobile devices to students from 1:3 in SY19/20 to 1:1 for the start of SY20/21, distributing nearly 13,000 mobile devices to students and families across the district to facilitate both remote and in-person learning.
- Received more than \$2,500,000 in new money from successful bids for local, state and regional grants in FY21.

- Negotiated improved agreements with facility and transportation vendors, resulting in more than \$500,000 in savings to the FY22 budget compared to prior forecasts, enabling greater investments in the classroom.
- Expanded and improved the grab and go meal service delivery system, resulting in over 1,000,000 meals served to students and families through the remote learning environment in 2021-2022.
- Launched a first-of-its-kind technology support system for the district utilizing outdoor tents and drive-up stations at selected locations across the district to support students and families with in-person technology trouble shooting and hardware repairs during MA's COVID-related shutdown of indoor gathering spaces, resolving more than 10,000 work orders during SY2020-2021.

Standard III Highlights

- Launched the District's first community-wide electronic newsletter to connect families across the District and inform families of pertinent information while celebrating school benchmarks and student and staff accomplishments (LPS Connector Newsletter).
- Increased access to district information for families and community partners across the city through an expanded social media presence, increasing the frequency of new posts to the district's accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter from less than 10 per month to more than 100 per month and increasing the number of total followers across platforms by 69% from SY18/19 to SY20/21.
- Launched the District's first community satisfaction survey with more than 3700 responses to the first survey administration and more than 82% of families reporting overall satisfaction with the District's communications and family outreach processes.
- Implemented a pilot family literacy initiative at two schools with 87 parents participating in SY2020-2021 and designed plans for scaling up the initiative to a districtwide rollout in 2021-2022 with centrally coordinated evening courses, workshops and learning events for parents, guardians and family members at all schools across the District (Lowell Parent Leadership Institute).
- Expanded parental involvement in school-based budgeting with more families than ever before participating in the spring budget process through active school-site councils at every school in the District for the first time in recent history.
- Improved the accessibility of parental choice through the launch of an online registration process, enabling parents to participate in the district's school choice and lottery system remotely during MA's COVID-related stay-at-home orders.
- Increased parental involvement through 18 virtual forums from August to May, engaging more than 2700 parents and guardians in district level discussions, ranging from school opening plans to safety protocols to grant applications to culturally and linguistically sustaining practices.
- Elevated student voice by establishing the district's first Student Advisory Council with representation from a diverse, cross-section of secondary students to inform district-level decision-making (Lowell Student Advisory Council/LSAC).

Standard IV Highlights

- Increased collaboration with staff across the District through 18 virtual staff forums from August to May, engaging more than 1800 staff members in district-level discussions, ranging from school opening plans to safety protocols to grant applications to culturally and linguistically sustaining practices.

- Negotiated one of the earliest Memorandums of Agreement for in-person learning among urban districts in the Commonwealth, establishing a collaborative agreement for on campus, COVID-related working conditions with both the United Teachers of Lowell and the Lowell School Administrators Association in September.
- Designed and implemented a locally-based, teacher recruitment and retention program to increase the number of teachers of color in district schools through a first-of-its-kind partnership with UMASS Lowell, increasing support and professional growth opportunities for current LPS teachers of color (Diversifying Teacher Leaders Initiative).
- Designed and implemented the district's first systemic approach to turning around chronically underperforming schools through a model of targeted, onsite support and progress monitoring, including an asset-based collaborative observation and feedback protocol following an instructional rounds model (Renaissance Network).
- Developed and implemented the District's first ever anti-racism reporting protocol with defined operating procedures for investigating bias-based conduct, monitoring related improvement efforts and implementing targeted interventions to ensure safe and welcoming environments for all students, staff and families at all LPS school and non-school sites.
- Developed the District's first comprehensive plan to embed Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices in all schools through a collaborative and strategic, research-based design process that included a diverse representation of staff members, including teachers, administrators and support staff.
- Implemented an employee commendation program to formally recognize staff members across the District whose contributions exceeded the standards outlined within their respective job descriptions with more than 60 professional commendations issued to LPS staff since the program's inception (Superintendent's Commendation Initiative).

Superintendent Boyd concluded his report by stating that overall; the district met or exceeded every goal and target that was established at the beginning of the year. However, despite the extraordinary organizational progress that the district has made so far, it still have a long way to go. The full effects of the disruption to learning that our students and families experienced this past year cannot yet be fully quantified, and those gaps in learning come on top of the opportunity gaps that our racially, linguistically and economically diverse populations have historically experienced. As the district moves forward into 2021 - 2022, the district must proceed with the sense of urgency that our families expect and deserve.

Mr. Descoteaux asked how we can help the staff and help the Renaissance Schools. He stated we should hire more paraprofessionals and that the district should be paying them more. He stated that buildings are better, but work still to be done. He also asked how many were involved in community engagement.

Superintendent Boyd stated that he would have to get Mr. Descoteaux that number.

Ms. Martin asked about the graduation rate and how impactful MCAS being waived is on that number.

Superintendent Boyd stated that there was a determination of competency across the state and that would be difficult to ascertain.

Ms. Martin also stated she was concerned with the attendance rate and if it well represented engagement from our students. She also stated that engagement overall needs work and that she has received enough feedback that gives her concern and that the prevailing sentiment is that there is a lack of managing conflict and building trust. She stated that she will be submitting her evaluation after she had the opportunity to ask the Superintendent questions.

Ms. Doherty stated that she doesn't believe that the evaluation followed the proper process. She also stated that she wanted it to be on the record that she does not believe Mr. Lay should be assessing the Superintendent. She stated that the Committee had no discussion around the timeline and weren't aware that this was going to be done in less than a week and that she has major concerns. She stated she had major concerns around the Superintendent inviting members to lunch to discuss his evaluation as well.

Ms. Clark stated that she checked with Mr. Koocher from Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and she was told that Mr. Lay has all the same rights as all the other Committee members.

Mr. Dillon stated that the Committee needs to organize better in the future and mentioned that one (1) member wasn't even part of the evaluation. He asked why Mr. Lay's rating matters. If he had graded the Superintendent poorly would we be discussing it and he has a problem with Ms. Martin not in the evaluation.

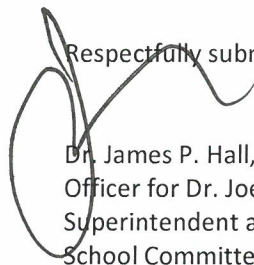
Mr. Lay stated that he believes that his vote should be counted and he believes it's his duty and should have the right. He also stated that he has served with this Superintendent before.

Ms. Clark stated that according to the Superintendent's contract his evaluation needs to be completed by June 1st. She stated that she agrees that next time the Committee should meet around protocols.

Ms. Martin made a motion to accept the evaluation with the integration of Ms. Martin's line item ratings and comments into the final version with an overall rating of proficient; seconded by Chairperson Clark. 3 yeas APPROVED

Ms. Martin made a motion to table the review of the job descriptions until next week; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 3 yeas APPROVED

Ms. Martin made a motion to adjourn at 7:22 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Descoteaux. 3 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. James P. Hall, Chief Operating
Officer for Dr. Joel Boyd,
Superintendent and Secretary, Lowell
School Committee

JPH/mes

